

even their boldness of execution is not accompanied with novelty, and with all these disadvantages it must be likewise acknowledged that English stores are far superior to the French in every respect. In this sale referred to, bracketed pilasters of former times still held on, and if the bronze candelabra had any new feature it was entirely owing to a change in the countenance of the little fat boy holding immense bunches of lilies: the china had still the Louis Quatorze mountings of centuries ago, and the chimney-pieces were in keeping; but there was no research, not near so much as in many a beautiful piece of plate executed in this country. The French artists have not made the slightest progress in the designs of the articles mentioned, in this generation, while the character of the same has improved wonderfully within these 20 years in this country. The unqualified encomiums which are lavished on the former are absurd, and enough to make one cry out with Marc Antony, "Ob, judgment, thou art fled to brutish beast, and men have lost their reason." But, allowing the French to be perfect in every respect, still to encourage their manufacturers at the expense and ruinous injury of our artisans and artists, is unreasonable and unjustifiable.

H. WHITAKER.

COMPLETION OF SOMERSET HOUSE.

WHILE Government are paying large rentals for private houses, in all parts, for the use of Government offices, which, by this means, are necessarily separated and inconveniently placed, there is a space (at the north-west corner) in this fine public building, devoted to public offices, left an unemployed and useless eyesore, reflecting discredit on the age. Whenever it be built on—which I hope will be soon—it will, of course, be in strict keeping with the present structure, cased entirely all round with Portland stone, placed centrally with the two ornamental gateways, and an exact counterpart of the northern wing of King's College; at the opposite or east end of the vista.

While on this subject, let me express a hope that the entire western face of this building, formerly merely a back front, but since the formation of the approach to Waterloo-bridge, one of the principal façades, will ere long be decorated with a handsome stone front, worthy of the pile, in perfect unison with the present river front. This, by the way, would form a very excellent subject for drawing out the talents of some of the junior members of the architectural profession. SPES.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT A FEW THINGS.

We are glad to be able to state, with reference to the Portsmouth statue of the Duke of Wellington, that the Gallic cock, foolishly placed under the foot of the Duke, has been obliterated, as we recommended.—The other night Mr. Hope very properly protested against the insecure state of the public records, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer re-announced his intention to propose a vote for the erection of a proper building to contain them.—St. George's Hospital, Hyde-park-corner, was on fire a few days ago, and the safety of the whole building threatened. Had the fire spread, the result would have been dreadful. All such structures should be fire-proof.—The palace at Claremont was in a similar position at nearly the same time. On taking up the flooring of the dining-room the girders and bond timbers were found in a complete blaze. It was evident the fire had been smouldering some time: the beams were burned almost through. The origin is attributed to the overheating of one of the stoves.—A Bill has been introduced authorising the advance of money to the extent of 2,000,000*l.* for Great Britain and 200,000*l.* for Ireland, for the improvement of land by drainage, erecting of farm buildings, &c. It also authorises the advance of 500,000*l.* for works of public utility in Ireland.—The Metropolitan Intermittents Bill has passed through committee *pro forma*, for the purpose of being reprinted with amendments.—A fine statue of Eve, sculptured by Powers, the

American artist, was recently lost on the Spanish coast by the wreck of the vessel on board of which it was placed.—A number of "navvies" employed on the Vale of Neath Railway have wantonly overturned, the well-known Logan or rocking-stone, which was situated near Sewd Wladis waterfall. The stone, which is supposed to weigh about 20 tons, was balanced so nicely that the merest touch only was required to shake it. Such stones were at one time employed as ordeals for persons accused of crimes.—A magnificent incense burner is about to be presented to the Pope from the clergy of France. It is stated as an innovation worthy of remark that the names of all the workmen employed in the chasing, as well as the manufacturer of the article, have been engraved on the inside of the cover.

CONVERSAZIONE AT ENGINEERS' INSTITUTION.

ON Tuesday evening last Mr. W. Cubitt, the president of the Institution of Civil Engineers, gave the usual annual *conversazione* in Great George-street, Westminster, which was attended by an immense number of persons.

Objects of art and science abounded, and the evening passed off most successfully. Amongst the models exhibited (under pressure from without) may be mentioned Appold's register hygrometer, Symon's patent weighing crane, Mon. Soyer's "magic stove," Le Molt's electric light apparatus, &c. &c. Mr. Moxon exhibited some imitations of marbles and inlaid woods, of extraordinary excellence. We have had occasion before this to speak of his great skill as a grainer and imitator of marbles.

METROPOLITAN COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

AT the last special court, Sir J. Burgoyne in the chair, the court granted 4,600*l.* for works for the drainage of Victoria-street, Westminster, and 1,410*l.* for similar works in High-street, Camden-town. A prearrangement was made relative to the filthy and dangerous state of Carrier-street and Church-street, St. Giles's. The court ordered notices for drainage to be served within fourteen days. The condition of certain portions of Southwark and Bermondsey next engaged attention. Mr. Foster and Mr. Grant recommended that owners of property there be called upon to introduce improvements. In connection with these districts the following works were ordered:—Laying down pipe sewers in line of open sewer, Long-lane, Bermondsey, 75*l.*; ditto in Wickham-place, Southwark, 50*l.*; ditto in Anne-street, Southwark, 60*l.*; ditto between Clarendon-street and Henry-street, Southwark, 20*l.*; ditto in Hunter-street, Southwark, 25*l.*; ditto in Farley's-yard, Old Kent-road, 45*l.* The covering of the open sewer between Gravel-lane and Green-lane, Christchurch, Surrey, at a cost of 35*l.*; the laying down of 160 feet of culvert in the line of open sewer near the Bedford Arms, Clapham-road, and of 132 feet of 18-inch barrel drain near same place, at a cost of 60*l.*; and the covering of 120 feet of open sewer between South Lambeth and Wandsworth-road, at an expense of 35*l.*,—were then agreed to.

A vestry was held in Westminster, on the 27th ult., to consider the expenditure of the ratepayers' money by the Metropolitan Sewers Commission, when a resolution was passed to the effect that the parish has great reason to complain, not only of the increased cost of the commission, but of the little they have done,—evils they attributed to its defective organisation; and that a petition, therefore, be presented to Parliament, praying for local representation in the appointment of commissioners. The Hon. F. Byng, in addressing the meeting, adverted to the manner in which he, Mr. Leslie, and other members of it, had struggled to counteract the extravagance and recklessness of party in the court,—to Mr. Harlalet's resignation,—the treatment of Mr. Phillips, and of the Westminster Improvement Commission, and other grievances. The Hon. Mr. Vernon Smith, and others, also addressed the meeting.

MASONS' PROVIDENT INSTITUTION.

A PUBLIC meeting of this commendable Institution was held in Exeter Hall on Tuesday last.—Mr. Tite, the president, in the chair,—for the purpose of explaining its principles and progress amongst the numerous members of the trade throughout the metropolis, and calling on them to extend their support to its very desirable objects.

The lower room of the building was pretty well filled, at least towards the close of the meeting, and all appeared to listen attentively to the explanations and exhortations by the various speakers.

The Chairman, in the outset, called on the secretary to read the last annual report of the committee, from which it appeared that the institution is now in the fifth year of its existence, with about 140 annual subscribers, and 300*l.* collected by subscription and donation, which they were very anxious to increase as much as possible before the next half-yearly meeting in July, when they ought to be able to do something for their poorer or more unfortunate brethren, or their widows or orphans.

The object of calling you together this evening, said the President, is to explain to you the good to yourselves derivable from such an institution as this, and to urge you, therefore, to put it at once into active operation. Till the favourable opinion of the trade be practically ascertained, the committee have resolved not to proceed to distributive measures. They call on you, therefore, to increase the comparatively handsome sum already in hand, and to enable them to make a fair start, by once for all succeeding past endeavours by a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether. Your exertions are wanted for behoof of yourselves. Your best reliance is, depend upon it, self-reliance; for when those above you see that you are fairly roused into a provident spirit, they, too, will be happy to second your humble but hearty endeavours to help yourselves. And all that is asked of you is to contribute the small sum of 2*s.* 6*d.* a-quarter, and with that from a sufficient number of subscribers, it is hoped to build some almshouses—a comfortable retreat for those of you who may come to require it,—to distribute a considerable number of pensions, and to assist those injured or disabled by accident, and the widows and orphans of those of you who may happen to be prevented by death from providing for your families. The laws of the institution were then explained in detail by the chairman, and one of the first objects to be attained pointed out, namely, to provide pensions of 7*s.* a-week to as many poor members as possible in the mean time, till an asylum can be erected. Other institutions of a similar kind, now in a prosperous condition, continued the speaker, set off from as small beginnings as yours. The Bookbinders' Provident Society, for instance, began in 1839, collected not much more than you have done in the same time. The bookbinders relied on themselves, and they succeeded. They began with 100*l.*, and have now paid to pensioners no less than 3,640*l.*, besides erecting a nice row of almshouses. They have cheered the old age of forty-four pensioners by this active system of self-reliance, besides other ten inhabiting their almshouses, and over and above have 1,100*l.* at present in hand. Beginning with 300*l.*, then, it is my deep conviction that you will, with the same spirit, attain to the same high position. Put your own shoulders to the wheel. To this he urged them, because he felt the importance and necessity of a trade uniting in such a spirit to help themselves. There were at least 2,000 working masons in the metropolis, and they had a right to expect at least a third of these as annual subscribers, and then they would soon be able to do all that the bookbinders were doing, after nineteen years of labour. He was happy to see some of their wives and daughters present—those who might become widows and orphans. He earnestly hoped they would use their influence in the encouragement of a provident spirit, that would enable them to see these benefits realized for those who might require them. He trusted, ere long, to see a masons' asylum amongst those many attractive buildings of a similar kind which may already be seen along the line of every railway radiating from the metropolis.

The first resolution:—"That the Masons' Provident Institution having assumed a prominent position through the exertions of its present supporters, and the time having also arrived at which the project may be carried into operation, this meeting pledges itself to assist in every possible manner the objects of so valuable an institution," was moved by Mr. Esterbrook, who exhorted the masons present to come forward and put down their names as subscribers,—and seconded by Mr. Thomas, who complained of the apathy of the working classes when exhorted to come forward and assist each other and benefit themselves in a provident spirit. It was no sordid spirit, he believed, that prevented this, especially when so paltry a sum was in question. It was a reckless carelessness, he feared, of their future prospects. Charity, it was said, began at home. Be charitable then to yourselves. Think for yourselves. Such apathy as that